

M. M. HEKAU

NIUE PUBLIC LIBRARY

For some years a limited service of books was given to Niue from the Palmerston North office of the Country Library Service. This service, though, was discontinued because of an inadequate library building, an ineffective record of loans, and an inefficient distribution of books.

In 1961 a public meeting was called to discuss the possibility of setting up a small library. There was a very poor attendance of approximately a dozen Europeans and six Niueans; however, it was unanimous in resolving that a start should be made in organising a small lending library with a nucleus of books from the New Zealand Country Library Service and others donated by local residents. A committee of six members was then elected to consider ways and means of getting the library started.

The Administration offered the use of a room in the Post Office building for use as a library and a grant of £50 was also given. After much preparation and hard work by the committee and librarian, the library was opened to the public in April 1962 with approximately 1,000 books, mainly on loan from Country Library Service.

At the beginning, the space was adequate for both the books and the membership, but as time went on, and with the addition of donations from organisations such as the English Speaking Union in Auckland and the Hamilton Public Library, it was soon apparent that the room was not large enough for its purpose. In November 1963 the Administration agreed to the library's making use of the old Court Room adjacent to the Police Office and the Agriculture Office. After it had been equipped to meet the library's needs the move was accomplished with the aid of Training College students who shifted the books to their new quarters.

We now have a basic stock of 500 books from the Country Library Service as well as a regular exchange of 200 books every six

Mrs Hekau is Librarian, Niue Public Library. Because of delays in the mail her article arrived too late to be printed with the accounts of Samoa and the Cook Islands published last month.

months. To supplement these we have received withdrawn books from several public libraries in New Zealand. A government grant of £250 a year and fees from subscriptions helped to set the library on its feet; with this we were able to buy books ourselves and to subscribe to several magazines. The present committee agreed to buy at least six popular novels a month; suggestions for these may be made by any member of the library.

At the end of last year we purchased £50 worth of abridged books for the use of our young Niuean readers; these have all proved very popular. More recently we decided to spend £50 on new children's books which have now arrived and are awaiting edgebound covers before going into circulation. With the regular purchase of books and Country Library Service exchanges we have found it necessary to withdraw some of the older and not very popular titles from all sections of the library. Withdrawn books and magazines are given to the hospital.

In April of this year the subscription of 5s. for adults and 2s. 6d. for children was abolished; we now have a free service offered to all residents of the island. The present membership is approximately 400, one-third of whom are Europeans and the rest Niueans, with the biggest majority made up of secondary school pupils. The library is open on two afternoons and one evening each week.

Recently, library services were extended on a trial basis to Hakupu, one of the outer villages, to which a library box was sent. There are only two of these in use at present; stock in the boxes, which are changed every two months, consists of our own books ranging over mysteries, thrillers, light fiction, non-fiction and magazines. The committee has considered the establishment of a mobile library, but this is unlikely to be in operation for some time yet.

The Country Library Service has sent an excellent selection of books in the twice yearly exchanges. Any ideas on the choice of these are sent to the Librarian-in-Charge to guide in selection for the next exchange. The usual 200 consist of 100 fiction and 100 non-fiction titles. There is also a request service available for members here who may want books which are not available in our own library; the only disadvantage of this service is that the books requested may be on loan for only one month.

We have no big problems at present other than the constant reminding of our young borrowers to take care of, and look after, books. I do hope that this carelessness will disappear in the near future. We also hope that in time the outer villages will be interested enough to ask for library services so that we may extend our work to all the people.